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PEACH DAVIS

THE MOUNTIE WHO
THRILLED TWO
CONTINENTS

ELLEN H. HENRY



THE 25th



PEACH DAVIS

THE MOUNTIE WHO
THRILLED TWO
CONTINENTS

by

LALIE BECKET



SECOND EDITION

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1926.

CALGARY:
THE ALBERTAN JOB PRESS, LIMITED



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Maple Creek, Sask.,
July 16th, 1925.

TO MY OLD COMRADE:

D. Davis, Ex N. W. M. Police.

You can bet your last dollar the writer remembers well a certain summer day some forty-five years ago when it was determined that a somewhat turbulent band of Indians, under one, Bear Head, should be got out of the Cypress Hills, far away from Fort Walsh and on to Battleford, and Constable D. Davis was detailed to go with them as Scout Guide, Supply Officer and Escort, all "by his lonesome" to that gang of would-be mischief makers.

We remember when you got them across South Saskatchewan River. The Redskins said they would a-hunting go and Battleford go hang. Also how Guide, Scout, Escort and Supply Officer, rolled into the person of yourself, packed the grub carts and said "Goodbye" to Bear Head and his loved ones; started off with the sulky crowd following like H—, hating to say goodbye to the grub pile. You certainly did the trick, old comrade, and may the luck ever be yours. It's things that were done like yours that helped to make the old N.W.M.P. the force it was.

May your shadow never grow less,

For the sake of the days of old.

Sincerely yours,

W. R. ABBOT,
Ex Sgt. Major.

"OH PEACH"

75029



DANIEL DAVIS, Ex N.W.M.P.

“PEACH” DAVIS

The Victoria Cross displayed upon the breast of a British War Veteran shows at once that he has performed some conspicuous act of bravery in the service of his King and country, and that they have recognized the fact, giving him this distinguished badge to single him out for special honor before all the world.

But there dwells in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, a silvered-haired man who, in the service of the Empire, carried through successfully an undertaking that was of



specific importance at the time, which changed the current of events from threatened disaster to a safe issue, hindering a war between Indian tribes and probable trouble and bloodshed that, in the words of the then Commissioner of the N.W.M.P., "There would be no knowing where it would end."

To this day he has received neither recognition nor reward for this outstanding "feat," that meant the risk of his life every day for nearly three weeks and a steadfast, enduring courage and diplomacy that few can command, placing him on a higher plane for distinctive bravery than many who have received and wear the coveted decoration mentioned.

And there are those who would endeavor to raise a cheer, to gain some tangible recognition and benefit for the veteran Mountie, whose faithful adherence to duty, in a desperate strait, commands admiration and respect; when, by means of his wits and sheer dare-devil courage, he tamed and outwitted a large band of Indians and carried them where he would; his own modestly concise statement being "I only did my duty."

What those five words meant of hazard and escape, effort and success, the following pages will tell.

Daniel "Peach" Davis may not have his name written in the annals of courts or kingly trains; but in matters where the fulfilment of his duty meant walking up to and shaking hands with Death, he takes a foremost place. He has made his mark in the history of the West.

When the North West Mounted Police came West in the "seventies" there were thousands of Redskins still

hostile and murderous, in spite of the signing of treaties and the taking up of reserves from the government. And when, in 1876, the "Custer massacre" thrilled the continent with horror—a horror reaching out to the mother country; General Custer, the brave American, with seven hundred men, being cleaned out by the cut-throat Sioux—it increased the warlike feeling between the white man and the Indian, revealing the bloodlust that remained in the seemingly subdued and friendly Indians of Canada.

Now it was in this year of 1876, just three weeks after the "Custer massacre," that a youth of nineteen years came West, with twenty-nine others, to take his place in the "Noble Three Hundred," less than a year after the first company of these "Pioneers of Justice," as they have been fitly called; and he little thought of what the future held for him, or that he should be singled out for one of the most dangerous and responsible undertakings of those daring men—the N.W.M.P.

From the moment young Davis arrived in the Wild West, fresh from a good home near Ottawa, Death faced him under such strange and nerve-racking circumstances that he wondered if he had been too rash in his desire for adventure. And in five years he had become so hard-boiled and so used to these persistent efforts of the ruthess destroyer to get him that he no longer gave him any consideration.

It was under the command of Major J. M. Walsh that he spent his first years in the famous force, and he pays highest tribute to that brave and astute officer for many a lesson in self-control and the carrying out of orders; and

he believes that it was the cool, calm fearlessness of this man, combined with a ready tact in dealing with the Indians under desperate conditions and an unremitting firmness and fairness to his men, that helped to mould an already courageous nature, serving both as an example and a restraining influence over one who might easily have become rash through a pronounced sense of the "fun of the thing" or a temper that might fire up and run into the most frightful danger uselessly.

On the way to the field of duty, young Davis gained the name by which he has ever since been known—"Peach." He well remembers how his partiality for the luscious fruit and the consequent "tit-for-tat" by-play at dessert on the steamer "Asia" brought about his christening by a waggish comrade, another member of the famous force. This took place nearly fifty-one years ago, and he has never since been known by any other name.

After three years of strange and hardening adventure—spells of taking his life in his hand to throw it away every five minutes or so—he, like others, left the force, but not the dangers; and he has many a stirring story to tell of even that short time, for he was back again in a year. Then came his crowning opportunity, when he took "Honors" in bravery, proving that his training and experience had sown seed that grew vigorously, bearing its fruit in due time, causing him to be chosen for a difficult and dangerous task, and enabling him to carry it out successfully, to the openly expressed astonishment of his comrades and commanding officer.

It was an emergency push, and he had to do it all "by his lones," a young man of twenty-three, in the year 1881.

Here is the tale:—

Peach stood before his commanding officer, Col. A. G. Irvine, Commissioner of the N.W.M.P. It was about four o'clock on the afternoon of a lovely day in the month of August, 1881.

A large band of Blackfeet had come down to Fort Walsh in the Cypress Hills, and were camped there. This part of the country was their own "hunting grounds," and at any time an Indian tribe would resent the intrusion of other Indians, for each tribe had their own particular "hunting grounds;" so when such a trespassing occurred, it usually meant a war between the two bands.

These intruders were renegade Canadian Indians, who had from time to time slipped over to the States and had been wandering round Montana, committing all kinds of depredations—murdering, horse-stealing and getting into contact with Sitting Bull, the notorious warrior chief of the Sioux, who had come to Canada some time after the "Custer massacre" but had been persuaded to go back again. These restless, wandering Redskins were composed of Assiniboines, Stonies and Crees, and they had caused so much trouble that the Americans were determined to get rid of them. It took two troops of cavalry to round them up, and Canadian permission to bring them over the line to Cypress Hills, which they did, the major portion of the escort returning to the States, leaving a few who remained on Canadian territory for a short time.

The Blackfeet resented the coming of this band so much that they got ready for war, the result being that a series of quarrels ensued and three Indians were killed.

It was a very serious outlook. Col. Irvine realized that the Indians must be separated. There must be no

delay--there were thousands of them. The strange Indians must be removed from the grounds on which the Blackfeet were camped to a reservation at Battleford, 180 miles away. But how? By whom? A spark might lead to a conflagration; and now a fuse had been lighted by the killing of these men. If these two large bands of Indians were to go to war, there would be no telling where the thing would end. Men could not be spared, but it must be done. At any moment the blood-curdling war-cry might sound and the situation become unthinkable. . . . Yes, there must be no delay—not an instant. . . .

There was one man whom he thought might be able to conduct the Indians; young, certainly, but he had the necessary qualifications of character and experience. Even at that, would he succeed? The Indians must be separated—that was a certainty. The Police must do it—must risk a life, perhaps. Well, that was what they were there for!

“Do you think you can do it, Davis?” Col. Irvine’s face was stern and grave, but he thought he knew his man.

Dark of eye and bronzed of cheek, Peach Davis was hard-boiled at twenty-three, and, as he met the eyes of his superior, he knew the hair’s-breadth chance he had of ever returning. But he replied in the same steady tone, as though asking leave:

“I’ll do my best, Sir.”

“Well,” said Col. Irvine, “you understand the position; —you know the Indians well, your knowledge of their language their character, will all help you. I know of no other whom I could trust to carry it through. Do your best. Do it at once, and DO IT AT ANY COST!” The last words

were spoken with great emphasis. Two pairs of eyes were locked in a steady gaze—the blue of the hardy elder, stern yet kindly; those of the hardened young Mountie, dark as night and glowing with the fire of a dare-devil courage. He had voiced his reply, “I will, Sir,” but it was in the inscrutable eyes that the real response lay, and the experienced officer saw the resolute determination behind the flame feeding it. He had chosen well. He was satisfied.

When the boys heard of it, they all thought that Peaches had “bitten off more than he could swallow,” and none of them held out any hope of ever seeing him again once he had disappeared with the turbulent crowd. Remarks greeted him, which were by no means optimistic.

“Old Peach is goin’ to cash in now!”

There was much to be done, and done quickly. Peach secured twenty-five Red River carts from the “breeds” in a camp near by, and laid in a stock of provisions from I. G. Baker’s store—cleaned it out! He had about 1,100 Indians to cater for during eighteen days or more, and a long journey before him through country where there was not a living soul. It would not do to go short. So he packed in scores of hams, sacks of flour and bacon, great quantities of tea and sugar, coffee and tobacco (plenty of that) and what not—everything that might be required that he could think of, until the carts were filled up. When everything was secure, it looked a pretty substantial outfit. What with a large band of Indians to feed and watch he wondered where he would find himself a little later.

So he packed his kit, had his carts ready, and went to fetch the unruly bunch. Coming upon the camp of about twenty of the American escort who had remained

on Canadian soil for a few days, he spoke to them. When they saw this lone and youthful policeman, they waited to hear what he had come for, but he soon enlightened them.

"I've come for the Indians," he said, as a sort of introduction.

He looked quite sensible, but the cavalry officer to whom he spoke, looked incredulous and queried:

"Where's yer squad of police?" Peach's ready reply mystified them, until the American turned his query the other way—

"Say, yer're not takin' that mob alone?"

"I certainly am," responded Peach, with cool assurance.

The cavalry man showed his astonishment as he drawled:

"There's no man livin' can take those Indians to Saskatchewan alone." And he looked across to where the Indian teepees could be seen.

"I'll do it or bust!" ventured our gallant Mountie, with more earnestness than elegance.

The American had a "you-make-me-sick" air as he turned away, evidently thinking here was a fool, if a brave one. So his reply had a thin edge on it: "Then yer'll bust!" he said.

Later on they saw the practical application of the young Mountie's assertion, for he had to get the Indians on the move as quickly as possible, and as he informed the chief that they were to "Get a move on" and come along to the reservation, he saw the faces of those around, sulky and unwilling, while the chief grunted in disapproval.

"Huh," he grunted, as he shook his head, "No, we not want to go." He shook his head again. The other chiefs standing by joined in with grunts of disapproval also, shaking their heads. Through the camp young bucks were wildly riding about and one or two seemed going on a scout for adventure by the look of them. Here was a set-out! But Peach was equal to it. He saw that he must use persuasion rather than threats or force; he had all the provisions that they were in need of, which was a powerful means of gaining his point, for he knew also that the Indian was like a grown-up child, and the same method of persuasion one would use with a boy would serve. So, when he realized their great unwillingness to give up their freedom he thought he would show them what they were losing; so he turned away, telling them they could stay there for all he cared, that he would take away all the "grub" in the carts—and a few other remarks to himself. He went over to the carts and got ready to move, but when they saw that he meant to take away all the food, they came to him saying that they would come, but to give them their breakfast first. But here, Peach stood firm, for he knew the Indian well. He said:

"No food will be unpacked and no breakfast until the first stop." But he talked a little more with them, and, as he spoke to Chiefs Bear Head, Loud Thunder and Red Cloud, he casually handed them plugs of tobacco, and soon he had them all persuaded that the best thing they could do was to go with him.

Then they began to strike camp. He had to "jolly" them to hurry them up, for many of the young bucks stood round with fierce and scornful faces as the packing of the Indian *lares et penates* went on, and he guessed he

was not going to have an easy time or a sure and certain arrival at Battleford if these men had their way. He gave four or five of the most amenable ones the job of driving some of the horses, though at the same time he did not know how he was going to keep his eyes on the crafty devils or the squaws, so that the provisions should not be depleted too rapidly, for the thieving propensities of the Indians were fully developed, and it was necessary to keep the sharpest lookout to detect them. He had seen, more than once, horses stolen in such a manner that only the keenest vision and oft-repeated experience could detect. A couple of Redskins would come riding with some horses, and lashing out wildly, they would cunningly bring them into contact with a bunch that were grazing, then move off rapidly with several more than they had originally. One could hardly tell how they managed it, nor could they be caught, though afterwards the Mountie got them—provided they or the horses could be recognized.

Oh, yes! he was in for a busy time; and perhaps more lively than he cared for. Well, as he said, when he was nearly shot down like a dog, almost the first moment he stepped on Western soil, and nearly every day after, coming up the Missouri en route for Fort Walsh, he would go through with it. "Sure, he would."

Then pandemonium set in.

After the lodges were taken down, they started packing, the women doing all the work.

Dust and disorder, clatter and confusion, young bucks loping round and in and out through the medley of living creatures and inanimate objects, youngsters yelling, dogs barking and snarling as they get a slash over the nose from one of the brown and half-naked small boys, while the old

crones grunt out choice epithets at them and the young men who nearly ride them down, as they drag forward their dogs to a travois (that peculiar method of transport used by the Indians, being two poles crossed and lashed together at the top, while the ends drag along the ground, and across this wider space is placed a circular network basket in which the kettles and pans are placed with all sorts of living necessities, bedding and the like, with, perhaps, a papoose stuck in, too, somewhere—comfortable enough no doubt); while here and there a young and comely squaw places herself astride a pony, other squaws distributing themselves on the loads with papoose or puppy or both. Some of the men walk, others mount two on a pony; the old women shuffle along with an uneven gait, often burdened.

The train crawls off, tortuous and serpent like, the Red River carts following each other in line, and, being entirely made of wood, they set up a creaking and squeaking worse than a hundred pigs being killed, and that can be heard miles away. As a set-off to this primitive orchestra, the less resonant miscellany add their quota to the general racket, which soon becomes "Bedlamic." Occasional shouting comes from the bucks who careen wildly around on horseback, without the slightest regard for the old crones or smaller fry who are in their path. Talk of the Children of Israel crossing the desert! If Peach looked as he felt he must have been a startling libel on Moses. But he stifled his feelings, for his business was to get these Indians on the move and far away—to an unmentionable place, as his thoughts ran just then.

Bear Head, chief of the Stonies, rides a pinto pony, his long hair in two great plaits at each side, tied with otter



skin, and his scalp lock hanging behind. He wears his bear's head cap, snook in front, and round his neck is a string of immense bears' claws, in the centre of which he has attached the face of a clock. On his arm is the nickel case and in his ears are large brass rings. His dirty white blanket, with its red and yellow border (the colors of his tribe) is thrown loosely round him. He carries a gun; and it is just as well to bear in mind that it is an armed band the lone policeman is conducting. Chief Bear Head is an Assiniboine or Stonie, which is the same thing—the northern Sioux. He is of medium height, solidly built, and has a reputation for wisdom with his tribe, who say "his medicine is strong," for he speaks forcibly on occasion and his braves obey him. He is about sixty. It is hard to guess an Indian's age.

The other chiefs ride near by, and all are quiet, sulky and unresigned. Peach feels as if he were dragging a heavy load with a rotten rope that may snap at any moment.

The going was necessarily slow—about ten miles a day.

At the first camp the carts were drawn round in a circle, while the women got busy fetching water and making fires, and, as Peach had instructed the head men, they gathered their families, who squatted in circles while the food was been distributed. It was a picnic for Peach! Sometimes there came a complaint that there was not enough to go round, and though he had to be careful that the portioning out was equal, for fear of disputes, he did not ask many questions, so that his troublesome charges should be filled up and kept in subjection. The most serious proposition he was up against at the moment was, that

when the discontented bunch were so filled, they might turn, right about face, and go back.

He saw the simmering and the small bubbles that, from time to time, appeared on the surface, but to which he shut his eyes while keeping them open, (Get that), and he knew the simmering might become a seething pot, through the blood of the young bucks getting hot at the slightest provocation. And here was where he found Bear Head of great use, for he had influence with the young men.

They set up the camp in the usual way, the lodges in a circle, dancing taking place in the centre, and at night there was plenty of noise and excitement. He made them corral the horses each night inside the circle of the carts, for he had a hunch that the Blackfeet were following them up, and though he knew they were after the horses, there was a possibility that when they sneaked round during the night some of these Indians might detect them and there would be a flare-up. Then he would have a part in the proceedings. It was disquieting, to say the least. To "fall asleep, perchance to dream"—but Shakespeare wasn't in it when it came to Redskins; and it was the sequel that concerned Peach. To wake and find a dark and sinister figure over him with a knife! (It is opportune to remark that, as a matter of fact, this very thing happened to him on another occasion.) And indeed, leaving the Blackfeet out of it, this was in foreground of the perspective every night. Well, he would keep his small but effective means of defence ready and, whatever happened, give a good account of himself. But, if ever Peach felt the need of an overruling Power, it was during these days and nights of "taking chances," when a shadowy spectre stalked



him, and the "sword of Damocles" hung over his head. (Oh, how he watched that fine hair-thread!)

There was not much sleep for him in any case, for he had to keep a sharp lookout to see that no food was stolen. So, he would don his blanket, leaving one eye out like a genuine Sioux, for not only did he wish to hide his identity from the Indians, but there were wretched curs about, who were quite capable of attacking anything that looked strange, or make enough noise to reveal his detective role and cause unwarranted suspicion, thereby increasing the danger of his position amongst them.

One night he caught sight of something moving in the neighborhood of the carts—which he recognized as one of the dogs that were used for drawing a travois—in the act of dragging a side of bacon from one of them. To be certain was to act with Peach. There was a quick movement on his part and a sudden cessation of movement on the part of the dog.

Though the Indians must have heard the shot, he wasn't worrying, and a few hours later the result reached him.

Next morning there was "H—I a - poppin"—a fine uproar! Bear Head sent for Peach and Peach sent word back to Bear Head that if he had anything to say to him to come and say it. He was "there to hear any complaints."

It was not very long before Bear Head, Loud Thunder and Red Cloud, with some braves, were at the door of his tent, their faces fierce and angry. Peach saw at a glance that they were in no pleasant mood, but he stood before them, asking carelessly:

"Well, what's the trouble?"





"You have shot a squaw's dog; what are you going to do about it? We ask you why you should do these things in the night." His eyes glared with a dull fire—discontent in their depths.

Things looked bad. They had been sulky and unwilling to follow him all along and very little would suffice to break the slender, invisible cord that bound their wild spirits. A word—a look—might cause a breaking loose that would soon finish the thing in the wrong way for him. The young bucks had no desire (and, he secretly believed, no intention) of arriving at the reservation if they could find a way of avoiding it; and what was his life—one young policeman. Some of these men had taken part in the massacre of Custer and his men, and if they made up their mind to kill him——

It was a moment for a daring spirit, yet he must stand firm and be tactful—call on all his resources, taking the place of command as though he had a hundred men at his back and——keep cool. He looked steadily at the formidable group before him, saying, without heat:

"If you or your braves had been doing what that dog was, you'd have got the same dose. The food in those carts is for you, not the dogs; the best thing the woman can do is to cook the dog and eat it. Then she will have dog, bacon and all! She can put her outfit on one of the carts."

Bear Head stared at him, and he saw the look change to wonder and a kind of approval.

"How can you speak like this?" he said, "Are you not afraid?" And he still stared at the young policeman with a peculiar expression.

"No,—why should I be? Fear? I don't know what



you are talking about. I am here to feed you and keep order and I am going to do it."

Still Bear Head stared. He seemed astonished and impressed by the cool and fearless attitude of the lone policeman. It was evident that the tone in which the reply was voiced had effect. Peach was doing his best to pull off a safe issue.

After a long stare in silence, which Peach returned, steadily, Bear Head spoke again:

"You are a good policeman—you speak with one tongue," he said, in a more satisfied tone, and after a little more palaver they went away quieted.

Each day there was a tremendous strain upon his nerve, his chief danger being from the fierce and restive young bucks; and sometimes if a bunch of them were near, he was ready to draw quickly, though it was during the night lay the real danger. Word painting is inadequate to picture the sinister shadow that hovered—sometimes too close for comfort; sometimes almost disappearing. It meant a vigilance such as only those able to see further than their own nose and capable of nerve patience could keep up, and there is no doubt whatever that if Peach Davis had been of an ordinary calibre—just a very brave young fellow—it would not have sufficed to keep this large bunch of partially hostile Redskins in subjection. Expert knowledge of the Indian character and high courage there had to be; but to carry out a prolonged in recourse with such a bunch—at such a time, absolutely alone—took more than these. Quick wits, diplomatic speech and action and above all, perhaps, control of one's own spirit, were

necessary. His wife's remark (and she has known him nearly all his life): "Yes, Dan has a temper, but it takes and 'awful' long time to rouse it." makes one think that, sometimes the glow of a rising fire shone through dark eyes, emphasizing the courage that, in any white man, gained the admiration of an Indian and invariably subdued him—for the time.

Hairbreadth escapes, thrills "sufficient to the day" he had, not to mention the discomfort of never removing his clothes (although a policeman was used to that), and at night when going round in a blanket, he kept his eyes where they ought to be and his hand on his hip, if there were any of the young men moving about. Some of these were not unfriendly, and he went with them to a tent where there were others gambling. Of course he knew their ways well, but he had never lived day after day in an Indian camp before—nor did he wish to ever again. No Siree! Yet, when perforce he had to be there, he tried to get on the best side of circumstances.

It may not be out of place to describe one of these "games of chance" here. One of the Indians would take some small article—a bead or a button—and, showing it on the palm of his hand, would then slap his hands together, close them and wave both arms round, behind and before him, while he chanted a sing-song ending with a staccato on a higher note and holding out both fists. The others would make a sign, signifying "Ahkota" or "Eetyanah," though silently, which hand held the bead, but when the sleight-of-hand performer opened them, he opened his mouth also showing it on his tongue! This, counting to his score, he thereupon pushed a stick into the ground, and *vice versa*.



Most of the young squaws were friendly to him, and it was by their invitation that he visited the tent where they were singing. As they stood in line, the women before the men, he slipped in beside a tall young Stonie, and as the song rose and fell in the peculiar chanting style of Indian music, he rose and fell with it—vocally. He thought he was well up in this kind of thing, but suddenly hit a wrong note! Consternation! He saw the start of his tall neighbour, the glance of eye; so, quick as wink, he was outside the tent and, with the speed of a frightened gopher, into his (tent) hole. It would have been no joke a moment later, and he knew it. The slogan for Peach at the fort was: "He was either getting into trouble or out of it," and here he was at it again.

Even though it was a risky business he was on, he saw the humorous side. One thing struck him funny—the way a young brave made love, covering his sweetheart with his blanket, when both would stand still for a long time. The temptation got him to bump a pair of these, and as he passed "two as one" in a blanket, he carelessly shouldered the brave, and with the corner of his eye he saw the lover turn as he quickly looked out from the blanket and gave a snarl of displeasure; but, passing on, Peach showed no sign of being aware that he had done anything wrong. He felt a slight satisfaction that he had given them a waking up.

Another inside view he got of Indian life was when, one night passing the Medicine Man's lodge, he heard such a shouting and hubbub that made him wonder what kind of doctoring was going on. Well knowing that he had no right to pry into these things, but curiosity getting the better of wisdom, he stealthily drew near, venturing to

peer in through the opening. The sight that met his gaze drew him inside immediately and near enough to see the whole proceedings. On the ground lay a naked boy, with ashes on his chest, moaning as if in pain; while over him was the Medicine Man, shouting and waving his arms in a dramatic way as if he were chasing invisible beings away; his eyes wild and glaring and his face all painted up in a hideous manner, as was also his body. It was enough to scare a host of fiends away, in Peach's opinion. Fascinated, he stood, feeling he would like to give this frenzied creature a scare himself, but just then the wild eyes turned in his direction, and, without waiting to see the result, he thought it best to slip out again, as it was against the religion of the Indians that anyone should enter the Medicine Man's lodge, especially if he were exorcising devils. Peach's curiosity led him so far, but not too far.

When they got to the banks of the South Saskatchewan, the Indians refused to go any further. Here was Peach up against the same difficulty as at the start—Blackfeet included. He had reason to think that they would soon make their presence known and were only watching their opportunity. If he could only get this bunch on the opposite side, it would be a great advantage; but no, they would not budge. He was in a dilemma, and wished that he could get the Blackfeet out of his head, but he couldn't. He had succeeded in bringing the Indians so far; a journey of ten days. They were a hundred miles from Fort Walsh and had nearly the same distance to go. They were surely a troublesome set. He felt not an iota of fear, but he was not blind to the fact that they were armed, and if he or they took a threatening or hostile attitude, anything

might happen, and his chance would be nil. He must think——

He wandered away for a while, coming back with his mind made up as to the course he would take.

When the Indians asked for the next meal, he told them that they would have it on the other side. They shook their heads; they would not cross.

"We want breakfast," Bear Head said, as he approached, with a scowling face and threatening gestures. "We go no further. Our young men want to go hunting—they need food—you have plenty, give them some."

Though perfectly aware of the possible consequences that might result from his reply, Peach, true to the traditions of the N.W.M.P., held to the words he had spoken, with unflinching courage.

"I told you that there would be no food on this side of the river," he said. His countenance bore a cool and cast iron appearance, but he was far from feeling that he could overcome the unwilling spirit that seemed to possess these dissatisfied Redskins.

As Bear Head walked away, looking black and sulky, Peach put on his considering cap again, and, going down to the river, where there was a dugout, he packed it with the necessary articles for making tea, got in and rowed across. There, he made a fire, boiled water in the big camp kettles and came back to the hungry and hostile bunch, who were clamoring for food.

Covering his feelings with a blanket of cool assurance and good humor, he pointed to the smoke of the fire and the steam of the boiling kettles, saying:

"Over there is the fire, place for camping and tea, all ready and waiting."

Peach won. It was too much for them. They ran to gather their things together, some of the women being the first to be astride a horse or on a cart, and it was amazing how quickly the whole paraphernalia of men, women, children, carts, horses, dogs and sundry, that made up the composite of sufficient worry, risk and responsibility to last Peach for the rest of his life, had crossed, and were on the other side, satisfying their hunger.

Camping on the other side, they became perfectly at their ease, and throwing off all responsibility, refused to corral the horses that night, despite repeated orders from Peach that they should do so. The day had been an exceptionally tiring one and he slept well. The consequence was that, as he had sensed, a war party of Blackfeet had crossed the river during the dark hours, and stolen **EVERY HORSE IN THE CAMP!** When Peach became aware of it, his feelings beggar description. We leave it at that, for this was the position—

“So much” provisions———

Not a single horse to ride nor draw a wagon———

Geographical position, a hundred miles from nowhere—and, it might be added with special reference to Peach, more than a thousand Redskins, a few hundred of whom were young braves who wanted their own way, and that was NOT to take the trail to the reservation!

A lone hand———

It needed self-control, for he had been provoked more than once by the young men in their efforts to circumvent his mission, and this last contempt of his orders and advice was enough to cause even one trained to discipline to see red, throw discretion to the winds and let go! He was not

altogether without resource, and could have used a means of persuasion, but courage and tact were belted together by the steel band of self-control, preventing a mix-up.

Now what was he to do? What could he do? Just what came to him—go on a scouting expedition, alone, which he did. After scouting about three miles, he came upon a half-breed camp. They had four or five horses, but he had the greatest trouble to secure one from the owner, who refused point blank. Peach had to threaten him, commanding the horse in the Queen's name, telling the man that he would be fully compensated and that if he gave further trouble he would have to take him along too. Here, again, the young policeman showed commendable self-control and humane spirit, adding to the fine traditions of the "Mounted," for he could have acted in a curt and very much more conclusive manner.

When he got back he selected the best rider in the camp, a young buck who was only too delighted to escape, as events proved. This man took a despatch to Fort Walsh—

"Please send relay of horses. Indians hard to hold."

"Fleet Wing," said Peach, "you ride like h—l for the fort and come back as quick as you can, with the horses." But he never saw Fleet Wing any more. He was a fine young brave and he liked his freedom too well. His face was more friendly than it had been, when he was given this opportunity for flight. Peach thought him a splendid scout and found him trustworthy, for he must have reached the fort in double-quick time, as the horses came the next day, brought by Sgt. John Ward.

During the short delay, an interesting event took place, a boy being born to White Gut, an Indian who was friendly

to Peach, and who asked him to give the new arrival a name, making a special request that it would be his own—Peach. But he thought this was bring it a bit too close.

Now it is an interesting fact that, in naming a child, the Indian takes notice of some outstanding feature in Nature or something that catches the eye; sometimes the circumstances, as Rain-in-the-face, Red Cloud, Falling Waters.

Anxious to keep the Indians pleased and pacified, he conceded to their desire that he should name the child, and, being on the banks of the river called "Swift Current," Saskatchewan, he could think of no better name for the boy. He didn't baptize him in the name of the Father; but he called him "Swift Waters" and thought he had done quite well, the parents and everyone round being pleased. Then there was nothing for it but that he should go right in to the celebrations that night. He found it an entertainment to watch them, and these few hours were a relief from strain. When the fun was at its height, an old man would jump up and join in—

"Ahkay-Wycheepee!" he would shout, and as the dance went on "Wanah! Wycheepee!", getting excited so that he looked wild and even dangerous as his excitement increased, holding a koo-ey stick or war club poised threateningly, as though in the act of killing. And when one understands that this war club has a long egg-shaped stone at one end, while at the other hangs a scalp or two—to see this wicked looking weapon circling towards one, well——

So Peach was careful to keep out of the way of accidents, while taking part in the dance. Some of the men had buffalo horns fastened on the upper arm, feathers in their hair and were all painted up. The women wore



very wide leather belts studded with brass tacks, and their large brass wire ear-rings were at least an inch and a half long. In the belt they usually carried a bit of tea, tobacco, or anything else they fancied, also a sheathknife for skinning purposes, for, while it was the part of the men to hunt and kill, the women did all the work. They wore plain full skirts, mooseskin leggings up to the knees, and mocassins. Some had a streak of bright red paint all along the scalp from brow to nape, the hair being parted at this line and drawn to each side, while more streaks of paint—blue this time—ran down the chin from the upper lip, giving them a hideous appearance. Some young squaws were quite presentable, and Peach made a hit with them.

Now, here is Peach with his relay of horses, ready to start off again. He feels glad that nothing worse than horse-stealing occurred. But again the bucks look fierce and sulky, and this time they absolutely refuse to go to Battleford. They want to go after the Blackfeet or go hunting and cut Battleford out altogether. Peach feels that there is a crisis and the shadow draws so close that it envelops him. The chances are that he cannot hold them this time. He is well aware that in a few moments he may be making a last stand, picking as many of these "Niches" as he can before he falls to be left as a prey for the buzzards—and the place that knew him would know him no more. Well, "Never say die" is a good maxim to act on; he must do as he thinks best. And with that thought, he packed up all the carts, while the bucks were no doubt seeing that their guns were loaded. When he had finished he told the turbulent crowd that he was going—with the grub. He then said "Goodbye" and left them.

There was more danger for him at that moment than perhaps at any previous crisis, for the young bucks would probably resent his taking the "grub pile"—take the matter into their own hands, break loose, seize the grub and finish him off. Though not before he had shown them how to do it! He had a slim chance. He was doing the best he could——

They let him go. But when he had gone about two miles, he heard them following up like a horde of cannibals. They could not bear to see the food taken away from them.

When they caught up to the outfit they were in a very ugly mood and wanted to camp there and then and eat; but Peach was equally determined to keep going until they reached Eagle Lake, a few miles ahead.

Then Bear Head came to him, saying:

"My young men are very sore at you. They threatened to cut loose and help themselves to the grub."

"If they start anything like that," replied Peach, "although I am alone among you, there will be a few 'good' Indians lying around before I've finished."

Bear Head looked at him and shook his head:

"I will do my best to stop that," he said, gravely. "for we do not want the Redcoats on our trail. I told them that if we killed you, the "Great Mother" would send her soldiers here thicker than the grass. Then we could not sleep in peace any more. That seemed to bring them to their senses. They gave their sign of approval."

So he had escaped by the skin of his teeth, thanks to Bear Head's influence with the young men. He felt pleased, for, if they had started in, they would have cooked his goose for him.

The Indians had their council ring, and Peaches could picture them as they sat, and the pipe was passed round, the chief first pointing it to the North, South, East, West and to the ground—for the dead. Then he would take the first pull at it, before passing it on. His life had been in real danger and Bear Head had found it hard to overcome them; and even now he was advising them of the trouble that would come upon them if they harmed the Redcoat.

When he saw Bear Head again there was a wonderful look in his eyes—

“Masunka,” he said, “you are my brother! I must tell you that you are a brave man to stand alone and speak such strong words as you have done to my people. — I am going to call you ‘Lone Wolf’ because you would have fought till you died.” And he gripped Peach’s hand.

After this things ran smoothly for a while. But, one morning when he took a look at the outfit as usual, Peach found that some of the carts were almost empty. He did not mention this just then, but he was determined to put an end to this pilfering, otherwise there would not be enough to last to the end of the journey. During the day he noticed that some of the old squaws had put their papooses on a travois, yet there was evidently a bulky load under their blankets, where the papoose was carried. He, however, allowed them to pack their load and when they camped at night and the rations were being served out, he called the headmen over to speak to them.

“There is stealing going on while I am asleep,” he said. “I wish to speak plain to you. You are stealing your own food. It is for you all, not a few. When we arrive at the reservation it is my intention to hand you

over the remains of the provisions to give to your people, and if the food stolen is not put back into the carts, I will arrest all the squaws and bucks who have any provisions and take them to the tie-up house."

When he had told them this, old Bear Head got busy. He went through the camp, shouting this threat, the result being that all the stolen stuff was put back that night and, as far as Peach knew, there was no more stealing. It was quite a large amount, consisting of hardtack, flour, green bacon, pemmican, tea and tobacco, and, in addition to these, some fresh meat killed on the way over the prairie. Each day the young bucks were on the lookout for game, and would often go a-hunting, when Peach might not see them for a whole day. They generally brought in a couple of antelope and would arrive at the camping place in the evening, sometimes before the main bunch got there. It was a sight to see the squaws putting up the teepees, hustling after wood and buffalo chips, others carrying water, while the bucks sat and smoked, it being against their religion to work. Some of them had two or three wives to attend to the work—squaws being bought or traded for a horse, bacon, flour, etc., in those days.

Towards the end of the journey Peach was presented with a pretty young Stonie squaw, Tim-loo-tal, who was herself very anxious to find favor in his eyes; but he told them he was not marrying then, and refused her with thanks. (*Verb. sap.* It meant marrying the whole family!) But it was not so easy to shake her off, and her parents were keen on getting Peach for her, giving him another chance when they got to Battleford, when they asked him what he was going to do with his



wife. He said he was not aware that he had a wife. "You had better trade her off to one of your young men; I have no place to keep her here," was his advice to them, supplementing it with a present of some tea and tobacco, as well as giving the young squaw something to buy a dress and blanket with, which perhaps helped to appease them for his refusal of a bride as a present! So ended the divorce proceedings of a would-be hymeneal affair. But not on the squaw's side; for, just before he left Battleford, she sent him word that she was going to be married, but that if he wanted her, to come and fetch her! Peach left it at that. She got married and he did not see much of her after that. But it was a standing joke with the boys, and he was often teased about Mrs. Peach as long as he was in the force.

Two days before arriving at the Indian reservation, when breaking camp, as he took his usual observation round, he found three old women and two boys lying on the ground, sick. He called two of the chiefs, Bear Head and Loud Thunder, to ask what it meant.

"The Medicine Man said that they were going to die, and they might as well die there as anywhere," was the amazing reply.

But Peach's reply was as much to the point, for he said:

"There will not be a bite of food given out until those sick people are loaded into the transport wagon." And it was only after a considerable amount of grunting that the poor creatures were bundled into the wagon. The three old women died the next day and were buried on a rack or Indian grave, elevated five feet above the ground, wrapped in blankets and left there. The two young boys recovered, and were so grateful to their rescuer that

they made him a present of some finely worked moccasins. One good point about an Indian is that he never forgets a kindness.

After this delay the camp then proceeded to Eagle-Hills without any outstanding incident, and Peach was glad to think that soon this risky and troublesome business would be through.

When they arrived at the Indian reservation, Peach surrendered a tamed and subdued bunch of Redskins to the Indian agent, receiving a receipt. He had been eighteen days in the company of more than a thousand of these people, who were by no means easy to manage and had in their ranks young men who had no intention of arriving at the reservation and who during that 180 miles had been, to his knowledge, on the point of killing him more than once.

Tired, fed up, but very much alive! Sore, for his clothes had to be removed from him at a necessary distance from the other members of the force—and burned immediately! To rub shoulders with a thousand Redskins meant a living multiplication table!

Peach then went to Fort Battleford and handed his despatches, with the receipt for the Indians, to Lieut.-Col. W. Herchmer, the officer commanding.

To quote Peach's own words:

"I'll never forget Col. Herchmer's face when he read the despatches. He looked me full in the face for at least two minutes. Then he said:

" 'Did you do it alone, Davis? By gad, you did dam well; the force is proud of you. I wish I had fifty men like you.' He grasped my hand, adding cordially: 'I will see that you get recognition for this!'"

Just then Peach's sole desire was for a bath and ✓ clean raiment. But now he is seventy years of age, and that was forty-six years ago. He is beginning to think that the recognition must have lost the trail.

Four years after these events Peach had the mixed ✓ pleasure of meeting with these Indians again, when the N.W.M.P. fought in the Riel rebellion of 1885. A few of them took part in the historical "Neck-tie social." November 25th, 1885.

Ex. Constable D. Davis ("Peach") holds the medal ✓ for the rebellion 1885. It brought him to the notice of the Prince of Wales on the occasion of his first visit to the Dominion, 1919, when His Royal Highness had a short conversation with him and shook hands. Peach is said to be the only veteran Mountie who possesses a complete uniform of the old days.

